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SUBJECT: ZANU-PF NO SHOW AT PRETORIA TALKS

REF: PRETORIA 2210 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The ZANU-PF negotiating team did not show up at the July 7 South African-sponsored talks in Pretoria, according to Roy Bennett, Treasurer of the Zimbabwean opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). (NOTE: The first round of the SADC/South African-mediated talks took place June 17-18, with the two sides agreeing on an agenda (reftel). END NOTE.) The ZANU-PF team was to be led by Minister for Labour and Social Welfare Nicholas Goche and Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa. Bennett speculated that ZANU-PF's refusal to attend the Pretoria talks may reflect the growing confusion within the ruling party, in light of the deteriorating economic situation in Zimbabwe.

¶2. (C) In lieu of formal talks, the two MDC Secretaries General, Tendai Biti and Welshman Ncube, spent the day discussing the agenda items with the South African facilitation team, led by Minister Sydney Mufamadi and Presidential Legal Advisor Mojanku Gumbi. From the MDC perspective, the discussions went "very well." Bennett believes the SAG now has a much better appreciation for the MDC positions. He understands that the South African team has gained respect for Biti. (COMMENT: This is in contrast to the SAG's generally low regard for Tsvangirai himself. END COMMENT.) The two MDC Secretaries General are working well together, Bennett said, with Biti in the lead.
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